Audio Tips for Public Betas, Alphas and Early Access

Some Tips I Picked up

Who's This Guy

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Game Audio for 11 years

Klei for 4 years
-    Shank 2, MotN, Eets Munchies
-    Don't Starve and Invisible Inc --- both early access

Am the whole audio team.

Along with 2 composers and 1 contractor.

What's this about

Doing Audio in Early Access is a bit different

This is -
- Not just for Steam Early Access
- For any Public facing Alpha, Pre-release Kickstarters, Own run Beta's
- For anything that's being played by people that isn't finished

And is what I learned -
- From Don't Starve which was pre-Early Access on Steam
- From Invisible Inc which allowed access in Alpha

Dev Cycle

Traditionally -
-      Prepro, Production, Final

Our early access games -
-      had 2 week cycles.
-      no hard ideas
-      lots of pivots
-      very fluid plans

This Meant -
-      packing traditional cycle into 2 weeks and repeating
-      figuring out what audio can be fluid
                          - constantly recording
                          - making structures
-      and what needs hard deadlines
                          - speech if you've got it
-      getting enough plan out of the team to work ahead

Unfinished and Unmixed

People will be hearing an unfinished and unmixed game. Get used to it.

Work with the team so items can be broken up so that as little unfinished parts go in as possible.

Delay parts that players won't understand if audio can't hit schedule.

Mix as much as you can as you go. But remember feedback is on an unmixed game.

Error on the too quiet side. To loud will cause players to turn things off.

Music and Contractors

Work out theme and/or title track first so that it can inform rest of the tracks.

Be prepared to throw music out. Some pivots may result in large thematic changes.
- Time period change in Invisible Inc ment music no longer fit.

Plan the interactivity of your ignore music. Define enough of the larger picture to do this.

Music needs a long term schedule so a plan that splits it up is safer.

- DS had music per season/area with working/fighting/boss fighting
- Invisible Inc was structured per corp identity.

If you're working with a sfx contractor -
- don't have them work to far ahead
- make sure they can be fluid
- keep them informed of pivots

Time sinks

Find out what they are as fast as you can.

Promo trailers can take a lot of bandwidth.

Be sure delegation pipelines work and don't need babysitting.

Team communication on priorities. Be sure you're working on the right stuff.

And pivots. Be sure it's still in the game.

Have process tracking but make sure it's agile and audit-able.

When you've got lots of SKU's leverage community for bug finding.

Community and Expectations

Be a part of the community. Wherever that is. Forums. Facebook. Twitter. Twitch.

You know audio better than anyone so be that advocate publicly.

If you do have community managers teach them about audio.

Teach the community what to expect. Like timeframes for music, mix issues and what comes in late.

Make the community feel they're being heard. That doesn't mean doing everything they want.

Be ready for asset diving. If it sounds good it'll happen. And they'll want you to thank them.

Sum it up

Be fluid

Be your own champion

Set expectations

Mix as you go

Always be recording

Thanks

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